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IN DEFENCE OF HINDUISM.

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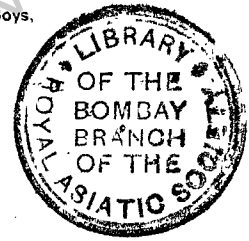
A Booklet written for Hindu Boys,

BY

ANNIE BESANT



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FOREWORD.

THIS is but a little book, composed of fourteen articles written by me in the C. H. C. Magazine, intended to help Hindû boys to answer the attacks levelled against their religion. To these I have added the panegyric on the *Râmâyana* by Jules Michelet. It is, therefore, simple and easy, and makes no effort to reach the grown-up public. I offer it, with my love, to my Indian sons.

ANNIE BESANT.

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IN DEFENCE OF HINḌUISM.

I. IDOLATRY.

IN all ages of the world, among all peoples, from the savage to the most highly civilised, images have been used in religious worship, and among the latter as a help in meditation. From local and temporary causes this use has been thrown aside by small minorities, but even then in appearance rather than in reality. Thus for about three and a half centuries a small minority of Christians, a section of Protestants, have discarded the use of images; but this is a mere temporary reaction from the superstitions which had grown up in connexion with their use. So also the Jews threw aside their use, as a reaction against the ignorant idol worship in surrounding tribes. The Mussalmâns, again, were taught not to use them, in order to break them away from the dark idol worship prevailing amid the surroundings of their great Prophet. And in later days certain Hinḍû sects—such as the Sikhs, the Ârya Samâj, the Brahmo Samâj—have cast

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aside the use of images in reaction from superstitious forms of idol worship in India.

It is instructive to notice how the ineradicable tendency to their use has reappeared in these very bodies. The Jew had his Ark, the Mussulmân has his Kaaba, the Sikh has his Granṭha ; and in the few cases in which a material idol has not re-appeared, a mental one takes its place, as we shall presently see.

Now wherever a practice is found thus universal and persistent, we may be sure that some fact in nature is its root, and that it should be understood, and purified if necessary, not destroyed. In fact, it cannot be destroyed, and, if its form be shattered, it takes to itself a new one.

The fact at the root of idolatry is that the limited mind of man cannot grasp, cannot understand, the unlimited Brahman, the one Infinite Existence. *That* can only be described by negations—"Not this, not this." The Nirguṇa Brahman—Brahman without attributes—cannot be thought, nor loved, nor worshipped. The Saguṇa Brahman—Brahman with attributes—Îshvara, He can be thought, loved, worshipped. Through His attributes we can reach Him, touch Him, feel Him ; to Him our aspirations can rise, our hearts can lie at His feet. Now an idol is an image which shows symbolically some

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attribute, or group of attributes, of the Supreme, some Person in whom His attributes are seen. Thus an idol of Vishṇu is blue, the color of the over-arching sky, has four arms, one for each quarter of space, bears the conch for creative sound, the mace for sovereignty, the chakra for energy, the lotus for spirit and matter, and so on. These great symbolic forms are seen in the higher worlds, and Sages, who have seen them there, shape their likeness down here to remind people of the Divine powers and attributes.

Or the idol may be an image of a Divine man, such as Shrî Râma or Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, or of a Being such as Gaṇeṣhji, Durgâ or Lakṣhmî. In every case, the particular Being is worshipped as a manifestation of the Supreme, One in whom His greatness is specially manifested, but whose human form manifests Him in a way to which the heart can cling.

Another fact on which idolatry is based is that God is the one Life, the only Life. He is everywhere and in everything, and therefore can be worshipped in anything. A tree, a stone, may serve as a physical representative of God. If a man worship a tree or a stone, as itself, he is ignorant; if he worship God in the tree or stone, he is wise and worships rightly. It is idolatry in the bad sense to worship a form instead of the indwelling Life; it is

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idolatry in the good sense to worship God in everything, and love Him in all objects.

After all, when we worship God, or meditate on Him, we form a mental conception of Him; we think of Him as Creator, Ruler, Father, Guardian, Justice, Power, Love. But this means forming a mental image of Him, a mental idol. Without *some* conception we cannot worship, nor even think of Him. And surely none can pretend that his conception embodies more than a fragment of the Divine Nature. But these mental idols are often more dangerous than the physical, for no man can confound the physical image with God, whereas many do dimly fancy that their mental conception of God *is* God.

Here is an instructive (and true) little story. A yogi sat in a temple worshipping; a missionary put in his head and said: "What are you doing?" "I worship God," was the gentle answer. "You should worship *my* God," said the missionary. "Are there then two Gods?" said the yogi. And the missionary went away abashed.

In meditation, an idol forms a point on which the mind can be concentrated; after a few moments of steady gazing, the eyes should be closed, and the image reproduced by the mind, and the attention fastened to it. As the mind grows steady, the

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form disappears and the indwelling life pervades the consciousness, filling it with life and joy.

A further use of an idol is that it forms a magnetic centre. A highly evolved person can draw down on an image some of the magnetism of the Being it represents, and worship and meditation are much facilitated by the presence of such an image. The pure and soothing magnetism spreads around it, creating a most helpful atmosphere, so that the mind grows calm and steady with very little effort. And yet again—such a prepared centre is very readily strengthened and revivified by the Being whose magnetism already is present there, and the prayer or meditation of the Bhakṭa drawing His attention, He sends an answering current through the centre already made.

Any one who has studied magnetism according to the European methods will at once see this aspect of an idol, and will recognise the scientific wisdom of the eastern Sages in sanctioning the use of images.

Rash and unwise are they who throw away the helps provided to aid the soul in its upward struggle, and would force upon all a single way of seeking the Supreme Self. The path of Bhakṭi is the one that many feet find the easiest to tread, and on this the use of images has ever been found a necessity in some stages.

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II. The Worship of the Gods.

"HINDUISM is polytheistic, and polytheism is a low form of religion." Such is an attack often made by thoughtless people, who fail to see that all religions, except when much materialised, are polytheistic in exactly the same sense as is Hindûism. Truly there is but one Existence, one Life, whence come, and in which exist, all existences, all lives. All, save the ONE, are derived, dependent. The ONE alone is Self-Existent, the Eternal Changeless BRAHMAN. Therefore in the Scriptures we read of "The Creation of the Gods," just as we read of "The Creation of men." The Gods come forth from Brahmâ, Himself but a partial manifestation of the ONE, but Their existence is as much a fact in nature as is the existence of men, and no more negates the Divine Unity than does our own.

In a universe the highest manifestation of the Divine Life is the Saguṇa Brahman, or Îshvara, the supreme Lord of the universe. For that universe He has three necessary aspects, the construc-

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tive (or creative), the preservative, and the destructive. He thus manifests Himself in Three Forms, the Ṭrimûrṭi. From Him, in His constructive aspect, the Gods are emanated, and thereafter act as His Agents, His Ministers, carrying on the work of the universe, building, preserving and destroying. They exist in innumerable grades. Concerned with the kosmic order are seven chief classes, each under its own Ruler, of whom five are at present revealed, generally named Indra, Vayû Agni, Varuṇa and Kubera. These names represent offices, rather than individuals; the individual who takes up the office of Indra Ḍeva takes that name, so that while there is a succession of individuals who are Lords of the Ákâsha, each is spoken of simply as Indra. (Readers of the *Mahâbhârata* will remember that five Indras once appeared together in the presence of Mahâḍeva, one regnant, and five whose reigns were over.) Under these chief Rulers are hosts of Ḍevas, who carry on the detail activities of the universe, vast hierarchies of brilliant splendid Intelligences, flashing through the realms of space, administering the laws which are the expression of the will of Íshvara; and below Them again the minor Ḍevas, who are concerned with single worlds, and yet lesser ones who superintend single countries and even districts. The universe is not an illogical absurdity in which exist

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minerals, plants, animals and men, in regular gradation, and then a vast gulf of nothingness with one supreme God on the other side; it is an ordered whole, a perfect unbroken chain of living beings. All religions have recognised this, and have given different names, but similar functions, to these vast hierarchies that stretch between man and Íshvara. The Buddhist, like the Hindû, calls them Ḍevas. The Zoroastrian speaks of them as Ferishtas. The Christian and Mussulmân call them Archangels and Angels. Names matter little. It is rather interesting that a famous Protestant writer, John Bunyan, speaks of the Angels by the Hindû name, and calls them "Shining Ones," Ḍevas. Probably he saw Them, and uses the name which best describes Their appearance.

The question then arises: Should men worship the Gods? Why not? We will not just now consider the worship of the Ṭrimûrti, but apply the question to the kosmic Deities and Those especially concerned with human evolution. The peasant, toiling at his crops, may surely well pray for the help and blessing of the Ḍevas who apply and adjust the laws which regulate rain and sunshine. If he is not committing a sin in asking advice or help from a man wiser than himself, why is he wrong in asking help from living beings, stretching from a speck of dust right up to Íshvara, in every

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grade of developing life and intelligence, more numerous above us than below?

Then there are many Devas who are concerned especially with the evolution of man in this world and in the worlds immediately connected with it Such are Ganeshji, Sarasvatî, and many others, who are ever ready to help and illuminate those who turn to Them for aid. Other types and kinds also there are, but this brief enumeration will sufficiently serve.

Is there any reason why men should not appeal to and respect a non-human superior, as they do a human, but in a higher degree? A man with a petition does not need to present it directly to the Emperor: he places it in the hands of an officer, present in his district, who wields the delegated imperial power. There is no disloyalty in recognising the Emperor's local representative, and there is no blasphemy in praying or showing reverence to the Deva representative of Îshvara. Moreover, an uneducated man can very dimly figure to himself the invisible Ruler, human or Divine, and his love and loyalty are more readily excited by a more concrete benevolent and protective power, felt as immediately present. The invisible Ruler remains as a brooding splendid Presence, overarching all—a dimly seen Glory, giving dignity and breadth to life.

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As a man evolves, he will cease to pray to the kosmic Deities, recognising that they need, no askings and pleadings of his to guide Their work, accepting all They bring, as the elder child ceases to importune his father and trusts his love and wisdom to do the best. But he will none the less treat them with the reverence due to Their high office, and with the gratitude due to Their ceaseless work for the world.

To the Devas concerned with human evolution, worship may also most fitly be addressed, for the strong aid They willingly render, for the illumination They can shed on the mind, for the teaching They are ready to impart. The student may pray to Gaṇeshji, to Sarasvatî, and find his studies made easier and simpler by Their help; and all may walk through life with their path brightened by this gracious companionship of our Elders, this kindly aid of the strong to the weak. Man need not be lonely, unless he so chooses, in a world so full of helpful Beings, and many a one left desolate by man has found consoling friendship in the Gods.

So let not the Hindû lad be overawed by five-syllabled epithets hurled at his most rational religion, but rather rejoice in the Polytheism which fills all the worlds with shining Forms and loving Faces, and Hands outstretched to help and bless.

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III. THE TRIMÛRTI.

THE great religions of the world, both ancient and modern, with but one exception—that of Islâm—have taught that the supreme Îshvara manifests Himself as a Trinity in His universe; that is, He shows forth a triple nature, embodied in three distinct forms. This is one of the most ancient teachings, and, in its universality and its antiquity, it bears the hall-mark of truth. The Jewish religion, that which is most closely related to that of Islâm, laid comparatively little stress in its popular teaching on this triple nature of the supreme Îshvara, the circumstances surrounding it leading to the chief stress being laid on the Divine Unity; but in the Rabbinical teachings, those representing the learned and philosophic Hebrews, the tripleness of the Divine nature was definitely taught.

This triplicity—three-ness—is seen to be a necessity, as soon as we consider the relation of Îshvara to His universe. It is this relation which renders it inevitable that He shall manifest Himself in three distinct characters, and no more, as the su-

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preme Lord. For a particular universe has a beginning; no universe has always existed; each is a temporary arrangement of Puruṣha and Prakṛti, spirit and matter, and this temporary arrangement has a beginning. For this, Îshvara manifests Himself as the CREATOR, and fashions and shapes the universe in that character. The universe being created—not "made out of nothing," but fashioned out of the everlasting materials—it is necessary that it should be maintained, preserved; hence He manifests Himself as the PRESERVER, and supports the universe, being the continuing thread on which all its changing parts are strung. But a universe, a thing of time, cannot last forever; it becomes old and ready to perish, worn out, fit only for destruction—that is, for being reduced again to its original elements; hence He also manifests as the DESTROYER, dissolving the universe. Then the THREE merge into ONE, and there is sleep. Thus the Days and Nights of Îshvara follow each other.

Though the THREE are thus fundamentally ONE, yet each root-characteristic of creation, preservation and destruction is embodied in a Form, a Person, a Being, and these Three are the "Three-form," the Ṭri-mûrṭi.

The Creator is Brahmâ, and He is sometimes

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represented as four-faced, each face representing one quarter in space, so that His attention is turned in every direction. Also He sits on the Lotus:

ब्रह्माणमीशं कमलासनस्थं

as Arjuna saw Him, when Shrî Kṛṣhṇa revealed His divine form. The Lotus is the symbol for spirit and matter—fire and water—and thus is the right seat for Him who fashions spirit and matter into a universe.

The Preserver is Viṣhṇu, whose name means that He pervades all, enters into all, and thus supports and maintains all. He is symbolised with four arms, again for the four quarters in space, as though His arms were spread out in each direction to uphold and protect. From Him, as the Preserver, come all the Avaṭâras, the Beings in whom He descends, as it were, showing out His powers as the Preserver, when the world is threatened by the powers of evil.

The Destroyer is Shiva, Mahâdeva, whose name means welfare, happiness, beatitude, for as He dissolves the forms, and draws the lives into His bosom, His peace enfolds all and they enter into a blissful rest. The name "Destroyer" sounds harsh in some ears, and perhaps the "Liberator" would have a sweeter, and therefore a truer sound; for He liberates the Jîvas from their sufferings and leads

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them into Peace. His symbols are the tiger-skin and the snake, and the guise of the ascetic; the tiger-skin marks the death of the lower nature, as the tiger that we all have to slay, and the wearing the tiger-skin means that that nature has been slain. The snake is the symbol of wisdom, and He who wears them as His garlands has supreme wisdom as this ornament. The guise of the ascetic is the sign that work in the world is only carried on for the world's sake.

Prayer is addressed most generally to Viṣhṇu, or to his Avatâras, as Shrî Râma, Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, because he is the Preserver and the Ruler of the world, the constant support and life of all, the Father-Heart that is ever loving and protecting His children, that understands and compassionates every weakness, and is always ready to help and strengthen. All that is glad and bright and beautiful in external nature and in human life is part of His splendor, and feebly expresses a portion of His beauty and His attractiveness. He is the God of the householder, of the family, of the home, brooding over all in protective love.

When men are turning away their hearts from the world and are weary of its changes, of its joys and its pleasures as well as of its pains and its griefs, then comes the time when the austere beauty of Shiva attracts them even more than the joyous

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grace of Viṣhṇu, and the tiger-skin and the serpent allure more than the peacock-feather and the flute. He is the God of the ascetic, of the yogî, of the closing stages of life, the Vânaprasṭha and the Sannyâsî. Devotion to Him means approaching peace.

Such are a few of the thoughts that grow out of thinking on the Ṭrimûrṭi, the forms in which God reveals Himself to the world.

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IV. Shrî Kṛṣhṇa.

THOSE who most attract the human heart in love are usually those who are also most hated, and there is perhaps no more striking example of this than Kṛṣhṇa, the Blessed. How He was adored when He lived on earth as child and man, by His parents, by Gopas and Gopîs, and the Pâṇdavas; how He was hated by Kamsa, and Shishupâla, and Ḍuryoḍhana. And what name has been dearer than His since His time to myriads of human hearts in India, to old and young, to men and women? And what name has been more blasphemed and outraged by the ignorant and the foolish, during late years when spirituality has been fading away?

The western Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, the Blessed Christ, had much the same fate during His life on earth and since; His mother, and His disciples, and several gentle and loving women adored Him, but the leaders of the people hated Him so much that they murdered Him. And since then myriads

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have loved Him better than any one on earth, while others have hated Him and have called Him very foul names.

There are many very striking points of resemblance between these two Divine Teachers of the East and the West, the Hindû and the Hebrew, as told in Their histories. Christ was, of course, Himself an Eastern, but His teaching has spread chiefly over the West; He was sent specially for the benefit of the western nations, the eastern having already had their Divine Teachers, from whom they had learned the same things as the western nations learned from Christ. The Hindûs had had Manu, and Râma Chandra and Shrî Krishṇa, and quite a crowd of Rishis, who had told them a great deal more than they are able to practise, and told it in such beautiful words, that no later teacher has been able to improve on them. The Chinese had had Laotze, a Teacher wonderful in His deep wisdom and all-embracing tenderness, also—with the Japanese, and Siamese, and Burmese, and Sinhalese, and Tibetans—had sat at the feet of that marvel of wisdom and compassion, the Lord Buddha, and needed no other spiritual Guide. The Persians had had Zarathustra, son of the Fire, and required no other Illuminator. But the young world of the West needed a Divine Man to instruct it, and that man was sent in Christ.

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The followers of all these great and holy Teachers ought to love each other as brothers, as do the Teachers Themselves; but alas! human love, until it becomes spiritualised, is very jealous and exclusive, and wants to make its own object unique, standing alone, high above all others and approached by none. And so the worshipper of Shri Kṛṣhṇa feels a great contempt for other peoples, and calls them Mlechchhas; and the worshipper of the Lord Buḍḍha says there are no Holy Ones outside the Sangha; and the Christian says that no one can be saved without his Christ; and the followers of the great and holy Prophet Muhammad, sent to Arabia and Syria in later days, are no whit behind the adherents of older religions in pride, but call them all "unbelieving dogs." Thus "they bite and devour one another," and use the blessed Names as bullets to pierce human hearts. As the religion of the Hinḍûs is the oldest, Hinḍûs should set the good example of love and respect for others; and no Hinḍû boy should ever allow himself to use contemptuous terms applied to people of other creeds and races. A man's greatness is shown by the breadth of his love, and not by the height of his pride.

It is said above that there are many striking points of resemblance between Shrî Kṛṣhṇa and the Blessed Christ as told in Their biographies.

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There is a reason for this. The lives of the Holy Ones are not as the lives of common men; the events of Their lives have a universal meaning, showing out facts in external nature and in the evolution of the human soul, which are always and everywhere true. And when wise men write Their lives, they bring out especially the more important of these facts, and they often lay more stress on the universal truth that an action was meant to teach, than on the actual details of the action; and this confuses unspiritual and ignorant readers in later times, so that they blaspheme the Blessed Ones for the very actions that are most full of deep instruction. Both Shrî Kṛshṇa and the Blessed Christ have suffered much in this way.

Now for some of the points of resemblance: Both had mothers remarkable for purity and deep piety, who suffered ill-usage for the sake of the unborn Child, but were protected by celestial interference. The birth of both was foretold, and the King of the land in which each was born tried in vain to murder the Divine Child. Both were very wise as Children. Both became Teachers of sublime morality as Men. Both restored to life one apparently dead, in each case "the only son of his mother and she was a widow," and performed many other so-called 'miracles,' such as feeding a great crowd with a few scraps of food. Both washed

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the feet of men, in sweet humility. The life of both ended in apparent disaster and gloom. Both rose triumphantly 'into heaven,' after the physical death. In fact, the outline of the story, as told in the sacred books, *is the same.*

Though Shrî Kṛṣhṇa came into the world long before the Blessed Christ, you must not make the common mistake of thinking that the later Christian story was copied from the earlier Hindû one. These great Beings live out *the same story*, modified by the needs and conditions of Their time on earth, but They do not copy from each other, any more than two painters who paint the same mountain copy each other's pictures.

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V. Shrî Kṛṣhṇa.

ONE matter which is made a subject of attack on Shrî Kṛṣhṇa is His relations with the Gopîs, and many bitter things are said on this score. To this there are some superficial answers, and also a deep one. We will take the superficial ones first.

Shrî Kṛṣhṇa had many bitter enemies during His life on earth, who assailed Him with unmeasured violence, and brought many charges against Him, but none accused him of immoral relations with women. Shishupâla is a striking instance of this. In his vehement tirade against Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, in which he ranges over his life, "defaming and polluting," he does not accuse Him of any crime of this kind. It is obvious that if His contemporaries condemned His relations with the Gopîs, His enemies would have made this a chief and most effective charge against Him.

Some think, as no such charge is made, that the Râsa Lîlâ cannot have occurred, but is a fanciful

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modern addition to the story. Or, that the writer of the *Bhâgavaṭa Purâṇa*, wishing to depict Shrî Kṛṣhṇa as the Lover of men's souls, told this story as an allegory only, and that it came to be taken as history. Others say that, as Shrî Kṛṣhṇa was God, the Gopîs were His creatures, and belonged to Him more than to their husbands; but this answer lies open to the retort, that if God appears as man, He would not undermine by example the very laws of purity that He has laid down by precept.

I agree with these, that the Râsa Lîlâ did take place, but that the circumstances were well known, and were such as to raise no moral objection: that is, that Shrî Kṛṣhṇa was a young child, with whom no improper relations could occur, and with respect to whom any such sexual idea was obviously and patently absurd.

It is objected to this that the language in *Shrîmaḍ Bhâgavaṭa* is the warm and glowing language of sexual passion. But this proves nothing. The language belongs to the writer, and if the deep answer that I am going to make be true, we shall understand that the writer would use the warmest terms to express the exuberant love he desired to depict. In all ages and all religions, men have used these terms—the warmest that human language supplies—to describe the relation symbolised in

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the Lîlâ. A striking example of this is given in the "Song of Solomon," in the Christian *Bible*, in which the language is far more glowing and detailed than in the *Bhâgavaṭa Puraṇâ*. Men in modern times may question whether such language is wise; but that it has ever been used, without any intention of conveying impure ideas in this connexion, is a fact beyond dispute.

Another answer is that the Lîlâ did not take place on the physical plane at all, as it is distinctly stated that the Gopas thought that their wives were with them all the time. But this answer is not satisfactory, as it is said in the text that this idea was the result of Shrî Kṛshṇa's 'mâyâ,' the implication being that the Gopîs themselves were with Him, and the husbands deluded, hypnotised.

The true answer is that Shrî Kṛshṇa, as an Avaṭâra, taught by His actions various great truths, and among these was the intense and single-minded devotion that the human soul should feel to God, abandoning all else if it conflict with love to Him. All human loves are but the means to the supreme love: they cannot obstruct and overbear it. The love-relation between man and woman has ever been recognised, and is, the earthly image of the love of God and the soul, and the self-surrender of the woman is the type of the self-surrender of the soul. Shrî Kṛshṇa was to teach this, and in order to teach

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it with the least possible objection, He taught it while He was Himself a child, and with persons who were no ordinary women, but who were, with their husbands, as the story says, God-like persons, devotees of His own in the past, born as women to show out their devotion to Him with all the passion women lavish on an idolised child. The praises sung by Gopas and Gopis alike shew that they recognised in Him an embodiment of the Great Lord, manifesting His power in superhuman actions. These saints of old, now embodied as women, seek the gracious Child, and He teaches them first by eluding them, by disappearance, that the soul must love in the absence, as in the presence, of its Lord. Then He re-appears, and He multiplies Himself, so that He stands between each pair of Gopis, to typify that God gives Himself wholly to each soul that loves Him, and that the soul possesses Him as utterly as though it existed alone in the universe save for Him.

This is the picture drawn in *Shrîmad-Bhâgavata,* and if, in describing it, the writer runs into exuberance of language, striving to describe the rapt exstasy of utter union between the soul and God, he might well fail to foresee that the picture of the Divine Child thus multiplied to the number of His devotees could be degraded by the coarseness of modern days into the lascivious adulterer,

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violating the homes of His friends.

If the story be taken as true at all, it must be taken as a whole: the Chief Actor must not be taken as a man, but as a child, not as an ordinary child, but as one able to multiply Himself at will; and the remaining actors must be taken as re-incarnated Ṛṣhis, beyond human passions. To take away these super-human facts, and to represent Shrî Kṛshṇa as an ordinary man drawing away His friends' ordinary wives, is to perversely choose out of a coherent story the parts which may serve as weapons to assail, and to ignore the rest. The story is an allegory, acted out on the physical plane.

The other story objected to, of His taking the clothes of the Gopîs and forcing them to come to fetch them, is an ancient allegory of Initiation, and was acted when He was about five years old—an age that does not allow much room for indecent ideas. It typifies the fact that a time comes to all who seek the Supreme, when they must be stripped of all if they would find Him. As a great Christian mystic put it: "The naked soul must follow the naked Jesus." The worldly man may object to the story as much as he would object to the renunciation it typifies, but those who hope to rise to the renunciation will feel the beauty and truth of the narrative.

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Perhaps the truth of a verse in the Christian *Bible* has never been better verified than in the case of the detractors of Shrî Kṛṣhṇa: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore must the science of the Spirit ever remain a Gupṭa Viḍyâ to the world, but there will ever be some who understand.

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VI. Shrî Kṛshna.

THE other great accusation against Shrî Kṛshṇa is that he led people into wrong actions, and thus made them immoral instead of moral. One favorite instance is taken from the *Mahâbhâraṭa*; the case in which Yudhishṭhira told a lie.

The battle had been raging furiously on Kurukṣheṭra for fourteen days, and on the fifteenth day there was a fierce fight between Arjuna, the son of Pâṇdu, and Ḍroṇa his old preceptor. Neither could gain any advantage over the other, and they finally drew away from each other, and charged in other directions, each carrying all before him. Then Shrî Kṛshṇa advised that some one should tell Ḍroṇa that Ashvaṭṭhâmâ had been slain. Now Ashvaṭṭhâmâ was Ḍroṇa's son, and it was thought that he would not continue to fight if he believed his son to be dead.

Arjuna, Shrî Kṛshṇa's especial pupil and best beloved, refused to take such means of gaining a victory, regarding a falsehood as unworthy, even though used as a stratagem against a foe

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and caring not for a victory stained by a lie. Bhîma, less scrupulous, slew an elephant named Ashvaṭṭhâmâ, and then shouted to Droṇa : "Ashvaṭṭhâmâ is slain!" a statement true in words, but false in the meaning conveyed. Droṇa was shaken for a moment, but then refused to believe the news, sending to ask Yuḍhiṣhthira if his son were really slain, for he firmly beleved that Yuḍhiṣhthira would never speak an untruth, even for the sovereignty of the three worlds.

Yuḍhiṣhthira hesitated. It was the fifteenth day of battle, and none could defeat Droṇa ; he was invincible, and the army of the Pâṇḍavas was melting away before him. As he hesitated, Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, standing by, advised him to say that Ashvaṭṭhâmâ was dead. Sheltering himself under this advice, Yuḍhiṣhthira said : "Ashvaṭṭhâmâ is dead," adding under his breath, "the elephant"—a poor subterfuge, seeking to gain the advantage of a lie while preserving verbal truth.

Here Shrî Kṛṣhṇa distinctly advised the telling of the lie, and this may serve as an instance of the cases on which the accusation against Him is based.

The answer to the accusation is that such trials of steadfastness in virtue, despite all argument and all authority, are the means whereby God tests those who are approaching perfection, but have yet left in them some traces of human weakness.

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Through some one to whom they look up, He tests the reality of their love of righteousness, their fidelity to principle, their steadfastness in right doing, their clearness of discrimination. And what Îshvara does generally through the agency of others, He Himself did as Shrî Kṛshṇa. He tested the three Pâṇḍavas, His dearest friends, those who were nearest to him; only Arjuna stood the test, and remained invincibly loyal to truth. The inner weakness of Yuḍhiṣhthira came out under the test, and bitterly did he suffer for his fall. But that suffering cleansed him from his weakness, and when at the close of his life he was exposed to a similar trial, and a God bade him desert a dog that was under his protection, he refused and stood firmly to the right, rejecting heaven if to be bought by a treachery.

It is thus that Îshvara tries us to the utmost, that we may become perfect and established in righteouness. Shrî Râma was commanded by His Guru to take the crown which was his by birth, against His father's order; He refused; Bharaṭa was commanded to take it, by the same sacred authority; he refused. Thus by example in Râmachanḍra and Bharaṭa, by counsel in Shrî Kṛshṇa, Îshvara has taught that a man must do the right, whatever authority may urge him to do the wrong.

Only a God, necessarily acting without selfish-

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ness and wholly for the teaching of the pupil, may thus test a man's virtue. And it was as God that Shrî Kṛṣhṇa acted.

Men are very much governed by words and appearances, and are thus often led into wrong judgment, Speaking generally, not only special tests of the advanced, but all the trials and temptations which meet us, under whatever appearance, come by the will and by the direction of Îshvara. He brings them all, and uses them all for our evolution, and in thinking of Shrî Kṛṣhṇa, we must remember that He was Îshvara in human form, and that many of His acts are the acts of an Îshvara and not of a man. We see in Him that even our temptations have a divine origin, and have our good as their end. Exactly the same thing is shown in the Christian *Bible*, where it is said that God accepted the offer of a lying spirit to go out and deceive a King, and bade him go forth and deceive. (I Kings, xxii. 19, 20.) Only those who cannot recognise that one unswerving will that works for evolution have difficulty in understanding Shrî Kṛṣhṇa's actions. He is often as difficult to understand as is human life, for the same Îshvara is in both.

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VII. SHRÂḌḌHA.

NO question is more often asked by Hinḍû boys than: "What is the use of performing Shrâḍḍha? "Why should we perform Shrâḍḍha?" The answer to this question may fitly find a place in a series of papers written "In Defence of Hinḍûism."

It is well, in the first place, to realise that the custom of helping those who have passed into the invisible worlds is universal. Even savages—the decayed relics of earlier civilisations—have not lost the idea of this duty, and discharge it in their ignorant fashion by burying articles of value and weapons with the corpse, or by slaying with him his favorite horse and dog, that they may follow and serve him on the other side. All civilised peoples fulfil the duty in a more rational and effective way, by suitable ceremonies and prayers accompanied by Mantras, Words of Power.

Among the Zoroastrians, services for the dead

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are always performed, but the offerings of food, clothes, etc. have become diverted from their earlier purpose; these should be distributed among the people who are still embodied, as they are useless to the disembodied; the old custom is to give alms of food, clothing, useful articles of all sorts, at the service for the disembodied, in loving memory of him, and for the purpose of associating with those who love him many grateful hearts, whose rosy wishes of gratitude and good will may form round him a peaceful and happy atmosphere on the other side.

Among the Buḍḍhists there are ceremonies embodying active help to those passing onwards, and quite lately, among the Shinṭo-Buḍḍhists of Japan, at a service held for those who died in the war just closed, Admiral Togo addressed the departed ones with love and gratitude, sure that the warm wave of grateful affection would encircle them on the other side of death.

Among the Christians, all but the extreme 'Protestants' hold definite services on behalf of the disembodied. In the Greek and Roman Churches, representing Christianity in its oldest and fullest form, 'masses for the dead'—in their main principles identical with the principle underlying the Shrâḍḍha ceremonies—are regularly performed Words and Signs of Power are employed, and bread, water and wine are the things used. One

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party in the Church of England, called the High Church party, preserves this venerable and useful custom of praying for the dead, but the other wing, the Low Church party, regards this, and all other ceremonies founded on the knowledge of the invisible worlds, as mere idle superstition. The Non-conformists, who are outside the Established Church, all sympathise with the Low Church, or Protestant, ideas; these ideas are the result of a modern and ignorant reaction against superphysical facts, and this reaction is gradually becoming weaker.

Hinḍûism, in its Shrâḍḍha, is only doing fully, rationally, and in unbroken continuity with the past, that which is done in all religions, but less completely. Unfortunately, too many modern Hinḍûs know as little of the facts underlying their ceremonies as do the adherents of other religions, and so, when intelligent boys ask questions, their elders are unable to answer them, and the boys grow sceptical.

Let us see what are the conditions of a person after death, for if we understand these, we shall be able to understand the reasonableness and the utility of Shrâḍḍha.

When a man 'dies,' he slips out of the denser part of his physical body, called the annamaya-

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kosha, the sheath formed by food. He goes out clothed in his remaining four koshas, and his outermost coating is then the prâṇamayakosha, the sheath formed of the life-forces; these life-forces act in subtle physical matter, the ethers of science, and hence this sheath is called in English the etheric body, or etheric double. The man does not remain long in this coating, for it belongs to this physical world, and keeps him a prisoner round his old haunts; if his dense physical body be burned, in the good Hiṇḍû way, the etheric body breaks up, unless the man tries very hard to keep it together; but if the dense body be buried, the etheric body goes to pieces very slowly, keeping pace with the decay of the dense. When the prâṇamayakosha is broken up, the man has for his outermost coating the manomayakosha, the sheath formed of mentality —of thoughts, emotions, desires, passions. The matter of this is re-arranged, so that the coarse parts are all on the outside, and these are called the kâmarûpa, the desire-body; while he is wearing this kâmarûpa, the man is called a Preṭa, a departed one, and he lives in Preṭaloka, the place of Preṭas: ghost would be the nearest English equivalent in popular language, but the word is a bad one, as many silly ideas are connected with it. When this kâmarûpa is worn out, the finer parts of the manomayakosha make the outermost coating, and the

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man becomes a Piṭṛ, an ancestor, and lives in Piṭṛ-loka, the place of Piṭṛs. After a while this coating decays, and leaves only the finest parts of the manomayakosha, and the man becomes a dweller in Svargaloka, heaven, the happy shining world of the Ḍevas. When he has reached that world, Shrâḍḍha can do nothing more for him.

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VIII. SHRÂDḌHA.

WHEN the man puts off his dense physical body, the annamayakosha, it is washed, swathed, and carried away to the burning ghât, the bearers ejaculating: "Râma, Râma, Sîtâ-Râma," as they carry it along, so maintaining round it the protective vibrations of the holy name. At the ghât, sacred mantras form part of the ceremony, bidding the man go on upon the ancient paths, not lingering near the useless garment he has cast aside; and these mantras, again, fill the air with waves of energy that protect and calm him, and that loosen the clinging prâṇamayakosha, so that it falls away from him, and leaves *him* in the manomayakosha, ready for the purificatory process, through which he has now to pass. He is now a Preta, in Pretaloka, and this, *if* he has not lived a very pure life, is the troublesome and often painful part of his experiences in the world into which he has gone. The Shrâddha ceremonies now—the Ekoddishta-Shrâddha—are directed to

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help him through this part of his life; first, by re-arranging the material of the manomayakosha into a form which, by bringing to the surface its coarsest constituents, enables them to be more rapidly eliminated than would otherwise be possible; and secondly, by helping forward the process of elimination. The mantras pray: "May they be purified," and the vibrations of the mantras in the subtle matter that surrounds us are like waves that wash up against the body of the Preta, washing away the coarser matter, and quickening the disintegration of the Preta form. The water poured out with mantras and magnetised by them, imparts its helpful magnetism to the Preta form, and so, again, helps forwards the desired disintegration. The Preta comes amid his relatives who thus seek to aid him, and is strengthened, comforted, helped by the work and their loving thoughts, and by their will directed to his freeing.

These ceremonies are performed during a year, and are closed by the Sapiṇḍîkaraṇa, which receives the Preta among the Pitṛs, dwelling in Pitṛloka. Water is poured out with mantras into water-pots filled with water, scents, and sesamum, and the man in the manomayakosha, purified sufficiently to serve as a means of contact with the subtler matter of Pitṛloka, enters that brighter world. There too his relatives and friends can aid him, in the further

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purification of the manomayakosha, till all that cannot enter into Svarga is finally purged away.

The feeding of Brâhmaṇas and the gifts which follow are intended to associate them with the family in this loving service, and the stress is laid upon the fact that they should be learned, because the ignorant, who understand nothing of the after-death conditions, cannot direct aright their thoughts and wills, and so can give but very ineffective help. Hence the *Mahâbhârata* enjoins that they only should be invited to such ceremonies as "are versed in the Veḍas, the Ḍhârmashâsṭras, the Purâṇas, the Bhâṣhyas, and the rules of grammar, who follow the standard laid down in the Shâsṭras, versed in the science of emancipation, devoted to truth and to yoga." "A man of intelligence should examine the Brâhmaṇas invited to a Shrâḍḍha." (Anushâsana Parva.)

Such are the ideas underlying the ceremonies of Shrâḍḍha, and all occultists know that these ideas are true, and that those who remain on this earth can thus help those who have passed into the next, and can quicken their journey to the svârgic world.

Nor should it be forgotten that those who, during their life on earth, have been accustomed to look forward to this assistance after passing through death, are grieved and disappointed if

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they do not receive the expected help. Never let us forget that our friends in the next world are conscious of our thoughts and feelings, and are affected by them. So shall we not fail to render them due service, and we in turn shall have the help of their willing and loving aid when they are beyond Pretaloka.

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IX. Hinduism a Scientific Religion.

IN the great conflict between Science and Religion which has been waged in Europe since the sixteenth century, Religion had been steadily losing ground, until the great spiritual impulse called Theosophy filled the hands of Religion with forgotten truths, and opened the eyes of Science to new realms awaiting conquest. Western Religion—built on books or on councils, as the inevitable result of having, in its early days, chased away its occultists and branded them as heretics—found it difficult to repel the attacks of a Science built on facts and strenuous in the search for truth. The exaltation of faith above knowledge, and the fear of the clear light of reason—which originated in the hatred of the ignorant for the Gnostics, and was strengthened by the hatred of the Moors—undermined Christianity in the minds of the most intelligent; while the bitter memories of stake, rack and prison stimulated men of Science to make the most of every new discovery that could be used

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against the dogmas of the Christian Churches. Many of these dogmas have crumbled away under the guns of Science; others have been transformed and beautified into transcendental teachings; the books are being gradually dropped as authorities to be replaced by mystic experiences, and an ever widening liberality has taken the place of the narrowness and exclusiveness of the past.

In these modern days of triumphant intellect, the various Religions of the world are being loudly challenged to justify their continued existence, and to shew that they are worthy to lead the vanguard of thought among the most highly civilised and scientific nations. Christianity has to pass through the fire in western lands: Hindûism, Buddhism, Islâm, must pass through the same fire in eastern countries. Religion cannot die, but religions have died and will die; a religion which cannot adapt itself to changing conditions shews, by that very rigidity, that life has departed from it; for the living body is adaptable, and when it ceases to be adaptable it dies. The problem of the near future for each great Religion is: Can it face fearlessly the modern spirit, and shew its power to dominate, shape and guide it, or will it be left behind as a landmark only, as have been left the once mighty religions of Assyria, Egypt and Greece? With the question whether Christianity can adapt itself and remain a living

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religion, I am not here concerned; it has changed so rapidly during the last half-century that it may be able to live down the story written in blood and fire during fifteen hundred years. The question with which I am here concerned is: Can Hinḍûism thus adapt itself? can it remain the guiding force in Indian life that it has been during thousands, aye, tens of thousands of years? can it preserve for India, for New India, the India throbbing with fresh vitality and saturated with western thought, all that is really valuable in Old India, the India of the philosopher and the ascetic, of the warrior and the philanthropist? That it can do this, that it can rule the Indian heart and guide the Indian life in the future as in the past, that it can stimulate thought and restrain passion, I profoundly believe. Based on knowledge, it need fear no advance in knowledge; profound in spirituality, the depths of the Spirit find in it deeps answering unto deep; it has nothing to dread, everything to hope, from growth in intellect, from the increasing sway of reason.

Let us see if we can justify these statements from its teachings in the past.

Hinḍûism was founded and built up by occultists, by men who knew nature in her various manifestations, her subtle worlds as well as her dense. The physical earth, the finer and ever finer worlds beyond, the seven great lokas with their various inhabitants,

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were all familiar to these highly evolved men, and were described by them as they may still be seen by a man using his subtle body—sûkṣhma sharîra—as his vehicle of consciousness. Hence they naturally did not make the mistakes into which men less evolved would inevitably fall. The revelations of geology, for instance, showing that the earth had existed for millions of years, and proving the immense antiquity of the human race, left Hinḍûism untouched; since, in opposition to the short 6,000 years which the missionaries had sought to impose upon the Hinḍûs as the age of the earth and man, it remained secure in its immense cycles of time, its four yugas of millions of years, its kalpas of 4,320,000,000 years, and its manifestation period of 311,040,000,000,000 years. Even when Lord Kelvin declared that the sun could only give out heat for a hundred million years, while Hinḍûism demanded for its shining a kalpa, a Day of Brahmâ, Hinḍûism showed no inclination to recast its figures, given by the Adept-Astronomers of the past; and now, with the increase of knowledge, a life-time is given to the sun at least fifty times as long as that assigned to it by Lord Kelvin. Thus has Hinḍûism been justified in respect to her vast cycles of time so jeered at by the ignorant. Truly have the tables been turned, in this case, by the increase of knowledge.

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X. HINDUISM A SCIENTIFIC RELIGION.

ONE of the main contentions of the Science of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was that psychology must be based on physiology, because thought and life were the results of certain arrangements of matter, they were products of physiological conditions. "The brain produces thought as the liver produces bile," said Karl Vogt. "It appears to me that every rational physiologist, provided he admits such a thing as the genesis of life, is compelled to trace it to a peculiar aggregation of chemical and physical forces" said Virchow. "Life is united not to a special anatomical arrangement of the living body; not to the co-operation of various organs; but to a certain physico-chemical constitution of formless material, to the albuminoid substance which we call sarcode or protoplasm, a nitrogenous carbon-compound in a semifluid state," said Haeckel This passage is interesting, as showing three views of the production of life then being discussed; from anatomical arrangement, declared one inves-

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tigator; from the co-operation of various organs, thought another; no, says Haeckel, life is from neither of these, it is from protoplasm; no one dreamed of arguing that it was a manifestation of Spirit, and linked men to superphysical worlds. After a long argument, Büchner remarks: "It results from all this that eyes were not bestowed upon us in order that we might see with them, any more than we have received feet in order that we may walk with them. Rather do we see and walk *because* we have eyes and feet. The function is not the origin, but the result, of the organ." And again: "The word mind is nothing more than a collective word and a comprehensive expression for the whole of the activities of the brain and its several parts or organs, just as the word respiration, or breathing, is a collective word for the activity of the breathing organs, or the word digestion is a collective word for the activity of the digesting organ." The brain is, indeed, he says, more important than the other organs, it is "the highest achievement of material combinations," but the idea of a soul, or Spirit, using the brain is derided. "Psychical activity is nothing more than a motion going on between the cells of the grey matter, caused by an external impression." "Thought is the result of the complex machinery of that material tissue which we call brain." "Mental activity is a function of

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brain-substance." It is unnecessary to multiply quotations to prove the well-known fact that the whole drift of nineteenth century Science was in the direction of regarding man as a wholly material organism, and Spirit as a mere superstition.

It is obvious that Hinḍûism is in direct conflict with these conclusions of western Science, and while accepting the facts on which these conclusions are based, it interprets the facts in an entirely different way. To Hinḍûism there is one eternal Reality, which manifests in time and space under a dual aspect—Saṭ and Asaṭ, Being and Non-being, Self and Not-Self, Praṭyagâṭmâ and Mûlaprakṛṭi, Îshvara and Mâyâ, Life and Form, Spirit and Matter. Never is this primary 'pair' found separated in manifestation, the one presenting itself without the other; known within is the Self, known without is the Not-Self, and the Not-Self depends for its manifestation on its recognition by the Self. In Hinḍûism, Life is the shaper, the moulder, the artist; matter is the shaped, the moulded, the material. Life is the director, the arranger, the controller; matter the guided, the arrangement, the servant. According to this view, a material organ is shaped by the effort of the life to exercise one of its capacities; the effort to perceive shapes an organ of vision, an eye; the effort to move shapes an organ of locomotion, a leg; the function

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makes the organ; the organ is the result of the function, not the function the result of the organ, as Büchner contended. Between conceptions so antagonistic as these two, no reconciliation is possible. They start from opposite poles; one or other must be wrong. The question to be decided is: "Which is right?"

This question is being answered by the experiments of Science itself, and with ever increasing force sounds out the reply: "Hinduism is right." and the best proof that this is the answer of the experiments lies in the changed attitude of the Science of the twentieth century.

The micorscopical examination into the minute organisms named Monera—the tiny lumps of protoplasm which are the roots of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and cannot themselves be called either animals or plants. These have no organs—no mouth, no digestive tract, no lungs, no heart. They are little bits of protoplasm, living creatures, and life's functions are shown forth, but no function has an organ. The creature needs *food*—any part of its outer surface acts as a mouth; the part within which is in contact with the ingested food acts as a digestive apparatus. The creature needs air—the whole surface takes it in, and it spreads through the whole lump. The creature needs the digested matter for assimi-

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lation—it filters through the whole and nourishes it. The creature needs to move—any part of the lump can be pushed out to act as a temporary leg, and withdrawn when the motion is accomplished.

As investigations are carried on, it is seen that the continual need for food, and the continual taking of it in, tend to produce a slight depression in the part of the body most used for this purpose, and the depression slowly deepens, and gradually becomes a canal, or tube, through the body, open on the outside, and thus a mouth and a digestive canal appear. And by slow and gradual process, as the life continues to function, other organs are formed : breathing bags appear and evolve into lungs, a pulsating vacuole evolves into a heart, and the extended portions are not withdrawn after use, and so become legs.

What does all this mean? Surely that the life wills to function, and shapes matter to its purpose. Surely that the organ is the result of the function, and not the function the result of the organ. Often and often we see a function expressing itself with difficulty, ere an organ exists fitted for its manifestation. But where can we see an organ without a function, save vestigial organs, the result of past and now discontinued functions? The evidence is clear and overwhelming that, under the pressure of the functioning life, organs for its better function-

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ing are gradually evolved, and that as the *Chhâṇḍogyopaniṣhaṭ* says, the Self, willing to see, to hear, to think, on this plane of gross matter, brings forth in it the eye, the ear, the mind. .

Such is the triumphant vindication of the ancient Hiṇḍû teaching as to the relation between a function and its organ. The bearing of this on the function of thought and its organ the brain must now be considered.

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XI. Hinduism A Scientific Religion.

If it be true that the life, expressing one of its activities, shapes in its enclosing matter an organ, through which that activity is thenceforth more easily and more perfectly exercised; then when we come to study the activity of life which we call thought, and its relation to its organ the brain, we shall be prepared to regard thought as the builder, the producer, of the brain, instead of considering the brain as the producer of thought. We shall expect to find that here, as everywhere else, life has shaped matter, and we should not expect to find here a sudden reversal of the previous methods of nature. As everywhere else the function has preceded the organ, and has shaped and improved it, so here also we shall be prepared to find the same order. And thus, in truth, it is.

The scientific demonstration that thought is not the product of the brain comes from the activities of thought in trance-conditions, and it is significant that Büchner derided mesmerism and hypno-

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tism, as mere frauds and impudent pretences. He saw that if the experiments of hypnotisers were true, the whole foundation of materialism was swept away; and, with a true instinct, he passionately condemned it, and refused all examination of its phenomena. For, in the hypnotic trance, the body is reduced to the lowest condition of vitality; the heart cannot be felt to beat, nor the lungs to rise and fall; the organs of the senses do not answer to impacts, and the man lies in a deep lethargy, insensitive to all that is outside him. The sluggish blood, unoxygenated, scarcely moves in the vessels that supply the brain, and it sinks into the inactivity of coma. Yet, under these conditions, the power of vision, deserting the eye, looks at things that are happening hundreds of miles away; the power of hearing, deserting the ear, listens to voices that are talking at a far distance; the power of memory, so limited in the waking state, gives back all the treasures committed to it during life, even to the events of infancy; the reasoning power becomes more subtle, when the brain is still; the imaginative power becomes more splendid, when deprived of its nervous instrument; every faculty, every power, of thought, instead of vanishing—as they would necessarily do were they brain-products—when the brain is paralysed, arises more vivid, more strong, more far-reaching, when set free from

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the prison of the brain. Triumphantly, indeed, has science demonstrated the non-dependence of thought on the brain, and the hypnotism that Büchner denounced as charlatanry is now accepted by every educated man. Thus rapidly has knowledge grown during the last quarter of a century.

Along another line, also, is science teaching us that thought produces and modifies the brain. The effect of thought on the brain is to render the cells it uses more complex, more intricate, larger, and we see how rightly Hindûism has taught its votaries that the practices of yoga—the regulation of diet, the steady meditation, fixing of the attention, etc.—are necessary for the safe reception by the brain of the subtle waves which play upon it from another world. The continual connexion found in the West between the exstasies of the saints and their hysterical nervous conditions, the unbalanced mental states of highly religious people, the instability of the brains of men of genius—all these things have made men, who are sanely balanced, dread the excited manifestations which seemed to threaten the overthrow of reason from her seat. The sweeping down of the powerful and subtle waves of finer matter on the unprepared brain inevitably give rise to hysteria; but the yogî, preparing his brain by meditation, gradually fashions it into an instrument fitted to receive the otherwise shattering

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vibrations, and thus by thought perfects the thought-instrument, and shapes it to finer purpose. In yoga alone will the western world find the method by which the supernormal may be made normal, and extension of consciousness be gained without danger of insanity.

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XII. HINDUISM A SCIENTIFIC RELIGION.

WHAT is the teaching of Hinḍûism as regards the constitution of man? Briefly stated it is this: the Jivâṭmâ, the living Spirit, takes upon himself sheaths, or material envelopes, or bodies, one after another, each successive envelope being composed of denser matter than its predecessor; each of these envelopes is composed of the matter of one 'plane,' or of a portion of a plane, and of these planes there are five, with which man is concerned in present evolution. The ordinary man may be said to be immediately concerned with only three of them, though men of genius, saints and other abnormal persons, come into touch with planes higher than these three.

The densest plane, or world, of matter is called physical, Bhurloka: our earth is composed of the denser parts of the physical matter, and the atmosphere round it of the less dense parts, while the finest parts, the ethers, interpenetrate everything. We have two bodies, or envelopes, made of physi-

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cal matter, one composed of solids, fluids and gases, and the second of ethers.

The next plane, or world, of matter less dense than the physical, is called Bhuvarloka ; sometimes it is called the subtle world, or the astral world ; astral means starry, and the matter is more shining than physical matter, and so was said to be like stars. This world also has its solids, liquids, gases and ethers, of which the bodies living in it are composed. We have a body belonging to this world, made of astral matter, and though it behaves like a single body while we are living on the earth, it gradually sorts itself out into two bodies after death ; one is the Preta-body, made of the denser parts of astral matter, and the other is the Pitṛ-body, made of the finer parts.

The third plane, or world, of matter finer than astral, is called Svarga, the heavenly or mental world. It also has its solids, liquids, gases and ethers, of which the bodies of its inhabitants are composed. We have two bodies belonging to this world, made of mental matter ; one of them is of the denser parts of mental matter belonging to the ordinary Svarga into which people go ; and one is composed of the finer parts, belonging to the Mahar loka, a body which is not very active yet, except in great people like geniuses and saints, and with which, therefore, we are not very much concerned here.

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Now these three worlds, Bhur, Bhuvar, and Svarga lokas, are all inhabited. Our own earth is clearly inhabited, as we and the numerous people we see, and others out of sight, and all animals, etc., inhabit it. But Bhuvarloka is inhabited quite as much as Bhurloka. All kinds of Devas live there, and Asuras as well; and there are crowds of Pretas there, in the districts named Pretaloka, and crowds of Pitṛs too, in their land, called Pitṛloka; and men and women still living on earth go there while their physical bodies are asleep, but only some are wide-awake there; and there are various other people and creatures there, innumerable multitudes, living their own lives.

The same is true of Svargaloka, except that very few men and women, still living on earth, are able to go there while their bodies are asleep, so not many of them are to be seen; but there are crowds of men and women there, who have come thither from Pitṛloka, and are living there happily until their time comes to be reborn into this world, Bhurloka.

Now while we are living here on earth, our astral and mental bodies put us into touch with the astral and mental worlds, Bhuvarloka and Svargaloka, just as our physical bodies put us into touch with the physical world, Bhurloka. And the inhabitants of those worlds can touch and make impres-

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sions on our bodies in those worlds, just as the inhabitants of this world can touch and make impressions on our bodies here. The curious mental phenomena, which are just now so much interesting and puzzling European psychologists, who have not had the opportunity, or the inclination, to study Hindû psychology, and the teaching of Hindûism on the material side of man's constitution, belong largely to these bodies. These teachings reduce into order the chaos of phenomena, assigned to the 'unconscious' in man, *i. e.*, to that part of his consciousness which is not in the Jâgraṭa state, his waking consciousness, functioning through the mechanism of his nervous system. Let us look at some groups of these phenomena.

Dreams. These are divisible into: (*a*) those caused, in the dense physical body, by repetitions in the brain of vibrations set up in waking life; (*b*) those caused in the etheric physical body, by similar vibrations; (*c*) those initiated on the astral plane, by (i) passing events or persons with whom the individual is not concerned; (ii) passing events in which the individual is concerned, and communications directly made to him by the inhabitants of that world, human and non-human; (*d*) those initiated on the mental plane; these are less common, as the physical brain does not easily respond to the vibrations caused on the mental plane.

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We shall consider these in order.

(*a*). These are unimportant, and are generally grotesque, unconnected, the piecing together of fragments of irrelevant and incongruous past experiences, and are without significance. The action of the brain-cells may be started by pressure on a nerve connected with some internal organ, stomach heart, lungs, etc.; by an overfull or too empty blood-vessel disturbing the brain-supply of blood; by impure blood ; by pressure from outside. Any of these, and other causes, may start activity in some brain cells, that will automatically repeat a series of vibrations, or parts of many series, previously experienced.

(*b*). Characterised by sequence and by a dramatic character, but of no greater importance than those belonging to the dense physical body. The very numerous dreams of a vivid and dramatic character, produced, by outside stimuli, as the dream of a thunderstorm, caused by sprinkling water on the face of the sleeper ; the dream of a duel, a battle, or a murder, caused by the firing of a pistol near him ; of a trial and execution by slight pressure on the neck ; etc. etc. (see Du Prel's *Philosophy of Mysticism* for many cases), all these are interesting, as showing the tendency of the etheric portion of the brain to produce pictures, as though it acted as the sensitive plate

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of a camera ; but such dreams have no significance as regards the man himself, though something about his etheric body may be learned from them. These dreams are, of course, remembered on waking, as they belong to the physical body, and the impressions are made in physical matter. But the real man, the Jîva, is not concerned with them, as he is away from his physical bodies during sleep.

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(*c*) (i.) When the astral body has left the physical, and the latter lies asleep, the astral body, no longer serving as a medium between the Jîva and the physical body, responds readily to the vibrations coming from objects in the astral world, Bhuvarloka, and these bring about changes in consciousness, more or less marked. Just as a man in the physical body may watch a crowd in the street, the movements of the persons therein being in no way connected with himself; as he may see a horse fall, or two dogs fighting, or a procession, or a dead body; so may the man in the astral body see many things around him in the astral world that are not related to himself, and have no significance for him. If he remembers any of these on his return to the physical body, he says he has dreamed of such and such a thing, but the dream has no bearing upon him and his affairs. Often an explanation of such a dream is asked for, and nothing can be said in reply except: "The

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things were happening, and you saw them." Such dreams may be very vivid and coherent, very interesting and impressive, but they do not 'mean anything' to the spectator. It is otherwise with (ii), in which the spectator is also an actor, in which persons also in the astral world may talk with him, give him information, teachings, warnings, directions, etc., in which he may see things that have not yet happened on the physical plane, or pictures of the past, reflected in astral matter from higher planes, and so on. Memory of any of these on waking would be called a dream, but such dreams are true memories of objective events occurring in another world.

(*d.*) What is true of dreams that originate on the astral plane is also true of those that originate on the mental, but memory of these is more rarely brought through to the physical plane, the subtler matter of the mental plane making memory more elusive.

When it is remembered that we are constantly clothed in the astral and mental bodies, it will readily be understood that impressions made on these during waking hours, vibrations set up in them by external objects on those planes, or by their inhabitants, will give rise to innumerable impressions, premonitions, warnings, fears, hopes, which, originating away from the physical body,

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are not intelligible to the reason, working in and limited by that body. Thus the existence of these subtler bodies, related to other worlds, as taught by Hinḍûism, gives a rational and intelligible explanation of the problems of the 'unconscious' in man, that are so puzzling European psychologists.

Religious experiences. In every religion we find that earnest and pious people have occasional experiences in which they become conscious of invisible presences, feel an inrush of peace and joy, are lifted above their normal consciousness, become illuminated with regard to spiritual things. In all these the medium of communication is one or other of the subtler bodies: thus, if the physical and astral bodies be reduced to passivity, the Jîva, in the mental body, becomes conscious on the mental plane, may share the life of Svarga, communicate with the Ḍevas, and feel the bliss of the heavenly worlds. Higher yet máy he rise, as in the rapture of the saint the contemplation of the yogî, and all this class of facts becomes intelligible when the Hinḍû teaching of the constitution of man is understood.

Genius. A genius is a man in whom the kâraṇa sharîra, the causal body, is active, and its vibrations are sufficiently powerful to impress themselves on the lower vehicles. Its activities are characterised by suddenness, spontaneity, illumination, not

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by the ordinary mental processes of reasoning. Its light shines out, illuminating the whole field of consciousness, and, like the sun, it justifies itself by shining. Even in ordinary persons there are occasional moments of luminousness and power, in which the man is astonished to find himself 'rising above himself.' Truly in such moments it is a gleam of 'himself' that shines through the dense matter that normally blinds and cramps him.

Telepathy and cognate phenomena. These are all due to vibrations of the subtler bodies, sending out waves, as in wireless telegraphy, that arouse similar vibrations in bodies they touch, which are capable of reproducing them. By such waves in astral and mental matter thoughts may be communicated, news may be sent, events in a distant land may be known.

When once it is understood that man, by his various bodies, is in touch with many worlds, is affected by them, and in his turn affects them, the chaotic impressions which reach him are reduced to order, and the complete understanding of them is seen to be a matter of an ever-unfolding consciousness and ever-evolving bodies. The disorderly, the miraculous, the fearful, disappear, and all becomes orderly, natural, and interesting. It is Hinduism which offers a guiding hand to science, and gives

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her the clue by which she may tread safely the labyrinth of the 'unconscious.'

As the Hiṇḍû boy learns, more and more, the splendor of the religion into which he has been born, he will be willing to wait for its further justification, and he will realise that science is approaching, by long continued and patient experiments, that which the Ṛshis of the past had learned by experiments and training of much longer duration, and that, by the intermediation of this most scientific of the world's religions, Religion and Science, so long estranged in the West, will again clasp hands.

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XIV. EVOLUTION.

Among the teachings which have revolutionised human thought, there is none more marked in its results than that of Evolution. There exists much difference of opinion as to its details and its methods, but as to the main fact of the gradual regular unfolding and the increasing diversity and complexity of forms, there is no longer any discussion among educated people.

Many people, however, regard the establishment of Evolution as the theory which alone explains the co[redacted] things around us, as the crowning glory of th[redacted]eenth century. And, indeed, this is true so far as Christian western thought is concerned though the followers of Muhammad were taught the great truth by occultists. But Evolution, the gradual unfolding of the inner powers of the life, the Self, is clearly and definitely taught in the ancient Hindû Scriptures, as witness the following passage from the second Âraṇyaka of the *Aiṭareya Brâhmaṇa* third Khaṇda.

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"1. He who knows the gradual unfoldment of the Self in him (the man conceived as the *ukṭha*), obtains himself more development.

"2. There are herbs and trees and all, that is animated, and he knows the Self gradually unfolding in them. For in herbs and trees sap only is seen, but thought (*Chiṭṭa*) in animated beings.

"3. Among animated beings again the Self unfolds gradually, for in some sap (blood) is seen (as well as thought), but in others thought is not seen.

"4. And in man again the Self unfolds gradually, for he is most endowed with knowledge. He says what he has known, he sees what he has known. He knows what is to happen to-morrow, he knows heaven and hell. By means of the mortal he desires the immortal—thus is he endowed.

"5. With regard to the other [illegible] hunger and thirst only are a seed of un[illegible]ng. But they do not say what they have known, nor do they see what they have known. They do not know what is to happen to-morrow, nor heaven and hell. They go so far and no further, for they are born according to their knowledge."

On this Sâyana comments: "All objects whatsoever, being of the nature of effects, are Upâdhis for this manifestation of the Supreme Self, Sat,

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Chiṭ, Ânanḍa, the cause of the universe. In the unconscious, earth, stones, etc., only Saṭ is manifest, and the Âṭmâ has not yet attained to the form of Jîva. The unmoving Jîvas, namely the herbs and trees, and also the moving Jîvas, which have Prâṇa as breath, both these are stages of manifestation in a higher degree."

Here we have the distinct succession of vegetables, lower animals, higher animals, man, clearly taught, and moreover the reason for the evolution—the developing, the unfolding, of the Self—is asserted; that great truth without which Evolution, as taught in the West, remains incomplete and unintelligible.

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THE RAMAYANA.

(This is an appreciation of the great poem by a famous Western writer.)

The year 1863 will always be to me dear and blessed, for in it I was privileged to read for the first time the great sacred poem of India—the divine *Râmâyana.*

"When this poem was first sung, Brahmâ Himself was ravished with it. Gods, geniuses, all beings from birds to serpents, men and holy anchorites exclaimed: "Oh! the sweet poem which we would always gladly hear. Oh! enrapturing song! How it imitates nature! How clearly we see this long history! It lives under our very eyes."

"Happy he who reads this book entire. Happy he who has read but the half of it. It makes the Brâhmaṇa wise, the soldier brave, the merchant rich. If, by chance, a slave (Pariah) hears it, he becomes ennobled. He who reads the *Râmâyana* is absolved from all his sins."

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This last expression is no delusion of the fancy. This great stream of poetry sweeps away our abiding sin; the dregs, the bitter leaven, which time brings and leaves in us, it washes away and thus makes us pure. Whoever feels his heart dry let him drink of the *Râmâyana*. Whoever has lost what was dear to him and is plunged in sorrow, let him draw from it the sweet comforts and sympathies of nature. Whoever has labored too much and wished too much, let him drink from this cup a deep draught of life and youth.

Man cannot always work. Every year he must rest, take breath, and renew himself at the great living springs which preserve their eternal freshness. But where are these to be found except at the cradle of our race—on the sacred summits whence descend on one side the Indus and the Gangâ, and on the other the torrents of Persia, the rivers of Paradise?

Every thing is narrow in the West. Greece is so small that I am stifled in it; Judea is so dry that I pant in it. Let me glance at the side of high Asia towards the deep Orient. There I have my immense poem as vast as the Indian Sea, blessed and adorned by the sun—a book of divine harmony, where nothing jars. A calm peace pervades it, and even in the midst of battle described in it we perceive an infinite sweetness, a boundless

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brotherhood, which extends to every living thing; an ocean without bottom or shore, full of love, pity and clemency. I have found that for which I was looking—the Bible of goodness. Receive me then, great poem. Let me plunge in thee, O Sea of milk.

It is only quite recently that the whole of this poem has been translated. It has always been judged by an isolated part or an interpolated episode, directly contrary to its spirit. Now that it has appeared in all its truth and grandeur, it is easy to see that whoever was its last compiler, it is the outgrowth of India—the product of its ages. During perhaps two thousand years the Hindûs gave utterance to the *Râmâyana* in the different songs and recitals which constitute this epic; and for the last two thousand years they have enacted it in the popular dramas, which were and are still represented at the great national festivals.

It is not a mere poem. It is a kind of Bible which, with the sacred traditions, contains nature, society, the arts, the Indian scenery, vegetation, animals, and the changes of the year in the peculiar enchantments of the different seasons. We cannot judge such a book as we would the Iliad. It has never undergone those expurgations and corrections to which the Homeric poems have been subjected by the great critics of Greece, the greatest of the world.

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It has had no Aristarchus. It comes to us unaltered. We see this in its numerous repetitions, and in some of its descriptions, which recur two or three times and even oftener. We see this also in the many additions which have been made to it at sundry times. Here we meet with facts of such antiquity as to reach back to the cradle of India, and again with things comparatively modern and of such delicate sweetness and fine melody as would seem to be Italian.

It has not been arranged with that skill which characterises the literary works of the West. No one has taken such trouble with it. Every one has relied on the unity, which such an immense diversity receives from a vague harmony in which the shades, the colors and even the opposite tunes are blended. It is like the forest and the mountain which it describes. Under gigantic trees, there is a superabundant life, which springs up from smaller trees, and from an infinitude of shrubs and humbler plants, which those wood-giants permit to exist under them, and over which they pour down their showers of blossoms; and these great vegetable amphitheatres are full of life. On high soar and flutter birds of a hundred kinds and colors; apes swing from the immediate branches, and now and then the mild-eyed gazelle is seen beneath. Is this totally a chaos? By no means. The agreeing

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diversities deck themselves with a commingling charm. At evening, when the sun extinguishes his overwhelming light in the Gangâ, when the noises of life are silent, the skirt of the forest exhibits all this animation, so diverse and yet so well blended in the peace of the sweetest twilight, in which all things love each other and sing together. A common melody emerges. This is the *Râmâyana.*

JULES MICHELET
(the French historian, in his
Bible of Humanity).

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS.

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